

Build your confidence

By Monica Wofford

A promotion may mean a new title, a bigger workspace, better business cards, and more responsibilities. But it does not mean that those who bestow your new responsibilities also grant you a larger supply of confidence.

Confidence might lead to a promotion, but it doesn't come with the job and it doesn't guarantee the next job level. But in order to lead a team, you have to be confident in what you are doing and how.

Confidence is a key factor in leading a team with purpose toward a common goal. Confidence means you believe you can do something, whereas self-esteem means you think you are worth it. They are close in meaning, yet not the same. The conundrum so many leaders face is they have confidence, yet lack self-esteem.

In order to increase your confidence and facilitate a more intentional leadership style, try these exercises:

- **Sit in the front row.** Sitting up front in a meeting, patient class, or theoretically in life, can build confidence — sitting in the back can show a lack of confidence. People notice those who are successful and who are successful leaders. Sitting in the front row will get you noticed, help you feel comfortable, give you more practice, and help you feel more confident in your role.

- **Make eye contact.** "When you lock eyes with another, it not only builds confidence, but it will win you confidence," says David Schwartz, author of the *Magic of Thinking Big*. Avoiding eye contact may send the message that you feel inferior or intimidated by the other person. Making eye contact, without staring him down, can help you connect on a level only direct eye contact allows.

- **Walk with purpose.** Psychologists say you can change your mood by changing your physical body posture. Throwing your shoulders back, lifting your head high, and moving a little faster can make you feel and look more confident in your approach.

- **Speak up.** Make an effort to speak up voluntarily at meetings. When you find that disagreement with your opinion is not equal to death and some folks agree

and tell you it was a good idea or insight, your confidence will build. For each person who might disagree with your opinion, there will be others who agree and support you.

- **Say cheese or money.** Smiling can be one of the best medicines for confidence deficiency. It is hard to feel bad or down when you have a big smile across your face. The simple truth is that much like walking with purpose can change your mood, a simple smile can physically alter how you feel and elevate your confidence. A real smile melts away opposition from others, helps to build rapport, and boosts your level of confidence in the situation.

While there is no need to walk fast, with a huge grin, a loud voice, with big eyes, and be in the front row every minute of every day, each of the above exercises can help boost your confidence level in the face of responsibilities you are not sure you can handle. As a new leader, the amount of confidence others have in you can be just as important as your belief in yourself. Actively learn your role, believe you *can* do it, and you're halfway there. ☺



Monica Wofford is a nationally known trainer, author, and coach. The author of *Contagious Leadership and Contagious Customer Service*, she inspires audiences to produce results. She can be reached at 866-382-0121 or at www.monicawofford.com.



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